

## **Foreign Language Academy** **IB Language Policy**

### **Statement of Belief**

At Foreign Language Academy, we believe that language is fundamental to the success of all student learning. This includes the ability to express oneself (communicate) through speaking, reading, writing, drawing, acting, etc. This also includes communication through different languages, including the languages of science, math, and the arts. Language is essential to the construction of meaning and connects all of our curriculum elements and ultimately supports the mission of our school. We believe that literacy instruction should connect to our units of inquiry, instilling an intrinsic love of literacy by using balanced literacy, authentic assessment, and instruction that is differentiated to the needs of each learner thus building life-long readers and writers. Through inquiry, teachers provide students with opportunities to use language in many different formats, including debate, role-play, and art, as well as the traditional teaching of language both embedded in the units of inquiry and as stand-alone subjects. FLA accepts the responsibility to recognize and support language development of all students through the expectation and understanding that all of our teachers work together to make sure that language is through integrated learning and meaningful contexts.

Further, as a language immersion program, we strongly believe in the benefits and importance of being bilingual. Barack Obama pointed out the importance of language learning at the 2008 Presidential Debate. He said:

“I also want to make sure that [our] children are getting foreign languages because this world is becoming more interdependent and part of the process of America’s continued leadership in the world is going to be our capacity to communicate across boundaries, across borders; and that’s something, frankly, where we’ve fallen behind.”

*-Barack Obama, 2008 Presidential Debate*

FLA fully commits to this goal of learning languages by offering a language immersion program to interested students in the Kansas City Public Schools. As a Signature Program in our district, any interested student may apply to attend our school and choose either Spanish or Mandarin Chinese as their target language of instruction. In the immersion classroom, students are instructed in the target language, in all subject matters. This produces students who are not only bilingual, but bi-literate.

### **Identification of Language Needs**

As required by federal and state guidelines, all students enrolled in Foreign Language Academy must complete a Home Language Survey indicating the language most often spoken in the home, as well as additional languages spoken. For any student who is not from a home in which English is the listed primary language, testing must occur to determine level of ability in English. This information determines whether or not the student is classified as a student for which English is the second language, and informs the school of the primary language. Any student who is determined to officially be “ELL” is placed with a teacher who is certified in ELL instruction through the State of Missouri. Students who are not fluent in English are also given a yearly exam, the WIDA, a test which determines their progress in the acquisition of the English language. Students who test at the highest level of competency are placed in monitored status to make sure that they continue to progress in their abilities.

In addition, FLA screens all incoming Kindergarten and First Grade students using the Kindergarten KLST2. This tool is used to preliminarily identify students who may have a language delay. If a delay is suspected, a conference is held with parents to determine if there are concerns and if FLA is a good fit, due to the language demands of immersion. Each case is reviewed on an individual basis. The results of the screening are also used to create balanced classes in Kindergarten. The groups are made balancing students with high language scores and lower language scores. This is an effort to create a diverse group of learners who can support each other with teacher help.

### **Support for Language Learners**

Our teachers are working to create a caring language community to enhance the language learning of all students. Foreign Language Academy strives to promote a language-rich campus for all students through the implementation of technology, multimedia and library resources. We ask that teachers be well informed of their students who have language needs and other language abilities.

As students are acquiring their target language, teachers use many resources to aid their development of the language. We strive to hire native or near native speakers of the language. This ensures that students are exposed to authentic language with a rich vocabulary. Having teachers from a variety of countries provides a unique opportunity for our students to hear different vocabulary and expressions from a variety of countries. In addition to classroom instruction, we have native speaking tutors who also work with our students in the target language to support their learning.

Teachers have access to many resources to aid in their classroom instruction. Technology is integrated into the classroom with both teacher and students having access to online materials. Teachers can access authentic content online to supplement the resources provided by the district. Many of the curriculum resources are also available online. Textbook and online resources are purchased by the district in the target language whenever they are available. The school has also purchased many target language materials for the classroom and Media Center.

### **Parent Support for Language**

Parents are encouraged to support language development at home through homework assignments and grade level newsletter suggestions. Parents may be asked to read with students on a regular basis, discuss concepts to check for understanding/comprehension, assist with inquiry-guided research, complete writing prompts, and encourage oral communication.

While the majority of the parents do not speak the target language at home, our teachers send home online and paper resources to our families to allow them to support target language learning as well as English. We encourage families to support their students' language development through reading and literacy activities in their home language. Developing a strong foundation in their native language translates into an easier acquisition of the target language.

### **Language in the Classroom**

In the classroom, language is supported through various literacy activities such as guided reading, writer's workshop, writing in content, classroom libraries, visuals, instructional vocabulary, individual word lists, daily read alouds and opportunities for students to use language during presentations and collaboration.

Learning is differentiated in the classroom in a variety of ways. Students are individually assessed in their reading ability in both English and the target language. Students are then

organized into groups, book clubs, allowing for small group intervention. Students are assessed individually in English using QRI and NWEA. In Spanish the students are assessed using the EDL2 and in Chinese they use the Better Immersion series. Writing is used to focus on meaning as much as technical skill, and self-expression is encouraged by regular intervals of written and oral reflection. The focus of the learning is for the experience to be relevant, engaging and challenging to each student.

Teachers use many strategies to aid in the acquisition of the target language. Total Physical Response (TPR) is a strategy which involves incorporating movement along with language learning. Teachers use gestures and movement to teach vocabulary. Teachers also use song to increase oral fluency in the target language of students.

### **Language and the Program of Inquiry**

Language is integrated throughout the Program of Inquiry. Higher level thinking, key concept questions, and extended research all lend themselves to having a strong vocabulary and language presence within the planners. Oral, visual, and written language are all present within planner activities. Literature selections both in read-alouds and guided reading are chosen to build an understanding of the concepts within the planners.

### **Additional Language**

Each student at Foreign Language Academy participates in an immersion track of either Spanish or Mandarin Chinese. Therefore, every child has the opportunity to acquire an additional language.

### **Language Resources**

Foreign Language Academy has an extensive literacy library of leveled books that support our IB planners. The FLA library has an array of fiction and nonfiction books. In addition, we have a variety of online resources to support student learning and research

Meridian offers professional development in the realm of language arts in a variety of ways. A professional library of resources is available for teachers to learn additional best practice methods and the teaching staff comes with a wide variety of abilities and experience and can provide professional development internally as well. We regularly utilize time during our staff development and team planning time to further our language knowledge.